

TO THE EDITOR.

LETTERS DISCUSSING MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE PUBLIC.

Some Points Bearing Upon the Question of "Wet or Dry"—Labor and Capital.

To the Editor of the Dispatch:

You have lately shown that you are willing to entertain a discussion on both sides of the "burning question" which is now moving our community, and on which a vote will soon be taken. This is right, and will enable all really fair men who are open to the logic of facts and of legitimate inference from facts to decide how they ought to vote. The friends of "no license" have absolutely no right to fear that they are favorable to a very intelligent and competent reader of all that has lately appeared in print on the subject said in my hearing to-day that thus far the argument produced an overwhelming impression favorable to the dry side of the question.

One of the articles, signed "Phis," in your issue of March 28th (read by me Monday the 29th) undertakes to deal with the teachings of Holy Scripture on the subject, and reaches the conclusion that they are favorable to the granting of license to sell intoxicating liquors—in other words, to the wet side of the question. I shall not make any conjectures as to the personality of "Phis," but shall deal simply with his attempt to deduce from the inspired Word of God his teachings on this deeply interesting subject. Evidently "Phis" has not studied the rules of interpretation and the "analogy of faith," and which have long been recognized by sound divines as the only safe rules for ascertaining the mind of the Holy Spirit from the inspired Scriptures. These rules forbid us to rely on any isolated texts or passages on any moral or doctrinal question when other texts or passages conflict with or modify them. These rules require us carefully and prayerfully to examine all that the Holy Spirit has caused to be recorded in the canonical Scriptures on any moral or doctrinal question, and to make our examination in the light of all the facts of history, archaeology, and science definitely ascertained to be facts by adequate evidence, and to give only such interpretation as will be consistent with all these texts, passages, and facts. Adopting these enlightened rules, the lesson from Holy Scripture becomes potent, withering, overwhelming against the wet side of the question now before us. The very first mention of wine that we have in the Bible is in the description of Noah's vineyard, where we are told that Noah planted a vineyard and made fermented wine and drank of it and got into a state of beastly intoxication and stripped himself to shameful nakedness in his tent; and that one of his own sons, who had been with him in the ark, and had seen the rainbow of promise, and had seen the typical land of the Mount of the rat, nevertheless, now when he saw his old father drunk from the law of wine, laughed at him and derided him, and told his brothers of it, doubtless with the expectation that they would join in his impious and unfilial merriment. Thus the wine from Noah's vineyard, his benediction and to curse on his son, and his posterity, which is felt to the present day. Such is the introduction to us of wine as a beverage in the Word of God! God did not intend that it should be used as a beverage any more than He intended arsenic, which is one of the primitive chemical elements in nature, to be used as food. He intended both wine and arsenic for good purposes, but not either for beverage or for food.

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and wine is a medicine. "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine own infirmities."—1 Timothy, v, 23. Here the use of wine is so plainly indicated that comment would be an impertinence.

But saith "Phis," Christ our Saviour converted water into wine. And he concludes, therefore, that Christ intended to teach that we may freely drink wine as a beverage. This is a gross non sequitur. God the Son wrought a miracle. When God works a miracle He transcends at once all our sphere of teaching and of action. We have no warrant whatever to attempt to follow Him or imitate Him in that sphere of miracle. The miracle authenticates His divine mission, and gives us no lesson in imitating Him—rather the reverse. Christ permitted demons to enter into two thousand swine, and they ran down into the lake and perished. Are we to attempt to imitate Him? Christ said to the fig-tree which had green leaves but no fruit: "Let no man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever." And the fig-tree withered away. Shall we attempt to imitate Him and fall to pronouncing anathema on fig-trees? Christ fasted in the wilderness forty days and nights. Shall we imitatively seek to imitate Him? Christ walked on the surface of the waters of the Lake of Galilee. Shall we undertake to do likewise? An impostor did not tempt something of the kind once and went under the water. Whenever a miracle is wrought we may be sure that there is an element therein which is entirely beyond our sphere of duty or instruction. Elijah called down fire from God in heaven which consumed two captains and a hundred soldiers of the King of Samaria, 2 Kings, i. Shall we attempt to imitate this miracle to warrant us in seeking sudden and violent death for our enemies? It is time that this absurd argument from a miracle of Christ should be abandoned.

And on this subject of "wine" and "strong drink" we are to remember that those words in Holy Scripture never mean distilled spirits. Distillation was unknown to the ancients, and was not introduced until centuries after the opening of the Christian Era. The "analogy of faith" clearly teaches that those deeds and usages which were permitted by God in patriarchal ages and even under the Jewish dispensation—permitted because of "the hardness of their hearts"—were really against the moral law as Christ expanded the use of the word "strong drink" in the practice of polygamy, in the right to divorce a wife without cause by a bill of divorcement, and in the *lex talionis*—the law of retaliation—"eye for eye," "tooth for tooth." All these wrong usages were expressly repudiated by Him.

Even in instituting the "Lord's Supper" we have no proof that fermented wine capable of producing intoxication was used. It is a very significant fact that not one of the four inspired narratives of that institution—neither Matthew, xxvii, 17-30, nor Mark, xvi, 12-26, nor Luke, xxi, 7-39, nor Paul in 1 Corinthians, x—ever uses the word "wine" as having been used in the original use of the word. It is "the cup," and Christ Himself, instead of saying "wine," spoke of the "fruit of the vine," which assuredly may have been the unfermented "juice of the grape," now so common and so constantly used in an increasing number of Christian churches in celebrating the Eucharist. Therefore, the inference that the use of wine as a beverage can be safely drawn from the ascertained facts as to the institution of the "Lord's Supper."

Thus we have the teachings of Scripture as to "wine" and "strong drink." Now we come to Christian principle, which is an immortal and ever-expanding germ of direction. "Abstain from every form of evil."—1 Thessalonians, v, 22 (revised version). "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." "It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is made weak."—Romans, xiv, 16, 21.

When we look at the facts attending the use of wine, distilled spirits, and intoxicating liquors in Christian countries during the past two centuries and contemplate the gigantic, far-reaching, and soul-destroying evils they have wrought, we cannot doubt that all the teachings of Holy Scripture condemn their use as a beverage as being immoral and sinful. Therefore the sooner this moral crime is made a legal crime the better for the good of man. TRUTH.

(For the Dispatch.)
Reply to Rev. F. M. Edwards.

III.
The members of the Monticello Grape-Growing Association meet each year, and will this accept, your pity for the losses that may result from your pernicious teachings. We demand and will contend for justice.

It is composed of old style Virginians, Germans, French, and English. Most of them are active church-members—(Catholic and Protestant)—of different denominations. It embraces all that is noble and noble in the professions, and includes college graduates. All are engaged in the cultivation of the soil, largely in grapes and fruits. They know that this has been a legitimate and honored calling as far back as history and tradition go. They are convinced that everything that has been or can be made from the growth of the earth, ushered into being by a Supreme Being, good and nothing but good. This embraces pure wine, cider, fruit brandy, and whiskey. When properly used these are blessings; when abused they lead to evil, as does every blessing.

Many of them know by personal observation that on the continent of Europe, where wines are used freely as a daily beverage, there is a marked absence of gross drunkenness, and that this is due to the fact that the drinking of wine is a social occurrence, though for the past year they consumed thirty gallons of wine per capita—man, woman, and child—aggregating 1,000,000,000 gallons, besides 300,000,000 gallons of cider used in the northern part of the country. They know it is drunk there in lieu of tea and coffee, and diluted in place of water. They know that in the Southern States, where French wine is produced and do produce the highest examples. They know that the heavy-drinking Teutons for ages past exhibit a vitality, a power of brain and muscle, surpassed by none. These facts known by them much better than our assumed premises are known by you, and therefore they decline to yield the evidence of their senses to your dicta to the contrary. Others of them who have not this evidence of their senses as to these facts know the same from authority. Writers numerous testify to these facts. See W. J. Flagg's "Three Years in European Vineyards" (Harper Brothers, New York, 1869), for some very pithy comments on the absurdities of your